

on the COVER



A child plays in the midst of the public fountains on Clematis Street in downtown West Palm Beach

Processing incoming and outgoing mail

Operating heavy equipment to move earth and other materials

Reviewing a vegetation map helps to assess wetland function and performance

Producing informational videos for public outreach

District headquarters in West Palm Beach

Commitment to Action on Florida's West Coast



“My role is to ensure that we serve and represent every region within our 16-county jurisdiction.”

— TRUDI WILLIAMS
GOVERNING BOARD CHAIR

As the Chair of the South Florida Water Management District Governing Board, my role is to ensure that we serve and represent every region within our 16-county jurisdiction. As a Fort Myers resident and business-owner, I know firsthand that Florida's west coast is a vital and integral part of the District, with distinct issues that are key to the long-term sustainability of our water supplies.

In recognition of this, the District has devoted the cover of this issue of *WaterMatters* to concerns of the lower west coast. In addition to the feature story, I would also like to share with you my personal perspective on how the South Florida Water Management District is working to benefit Southwest Florida at both the regional and local level.

WATER CONSERVATION

When it comes to water conservation – we're number one! West coast residents lead the state in adopting a culture of water conservation. The District has been instrumental in raising awareness and providing technical support, and many area municipalities have stepped up to the challenge by adopting local water conservation strategies. Now, the concept of permanent, year-round water use limits has been approved by my fellow Governing Board members, and steps are under way to make it

a reality. This effort will benefit each resident of our region.

The west coast has also emerged as a state leader in developing alternative water supply sources and uses. Cape Coral, the region's largest city, pioneered a successful reclaimed-water irrigation system that is the model for the District and the state. A majority of households use the reclaimed system for outdoor irrigation, and this saves precious groundwater. Partnering with us at the regional level, Southwest Florida has embraced, supported and funded ways of creating innovative alternative water supply sources.

THE EVERGLADES

The west coast will benefit greatly from implementation of the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan. The C-43 Basin Storage Reservoir Project, extending 45 miles from the Moore Haven Lock and Dam, is one of the largest reservoir systems planned, and will work to address the continuing water shortage and flood protection issues that we face here. In fact, \$76.1 million will be spent during this current fiscal year for Everglades-related projects in Southwest Florida.

THE BIG CYPRESS BASIN

While the Big Cypress Basin (BCB) has its own Governing Board and separate millage rate, I

serve as the Ex Officio Chair for the South Florida Water Management District. With a budget of over \$23 million, the BCB works to address the issues that are of significance to the basin (Collier County and a small portion of Monroe County). These projects include aggressive maintenance of the area's canals, capital construction projects for flood protection and water supply enhancement, and ecosystem restoration.

LOCAL ISSUES/LOCAL SOLUTIONS

A productive and mutually beneficial working arrangement is in place with the District and local elected officials, community and business leaders, agricultural interests, environmental groups and residents. We are also partnering with Florida Gulf Coast University and Edison Community College to extend our reach into the local community.

The District is committed to continuing its strong presence in Southwest Florida. To better reflect our dedication to serving all area governments/municipalities, we have formally changed the name of our Fort Myers office to the Lower West Coast Service Center. Under the leadership and direction of Carol Wehle, the District is now more than ever at the service of area stakeholders and staff has been authorized to make more decisions locally.

Our Goal Is Service

To assist the nine-member Governing Board in overseeing and implementing policies and initiatives, the Board appoints four key leadership positions that report directly to them.

The **Executive Director** serves as the Secretary to the Governing Board and is responsible for agency staffing and administering the directives of the Board. Like Governing Board members, the Executive Director must be approved by the Governor and confirmed by the Florida Senate.

The **General Counsel** provides a wealth of knowledge and experience in providing and managing legal support for the agency and the Governing Board, and is actively engaged in agency policy development.

The **District Ombudsman** responds to inquiries and complaints regarding District regulatory policies and practices, budgeting issues and general operational processes – providing a neutral point of contact to address citizen issues and concerns.

The **Inspector General** provides independent review of agency operations through objective and professional audits, investigations, reviews, and evaluations of the economy, efficiency and/or effectiveness of taxpayer-financed programs.



HENRY DEAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



JOHN FUMERO
GENERAL COUNSEL



RICHARD E. WILLIAMS
DISTRICT OMBUDSMAN



ALLAN VANN
INSPECTOR GENERAL



Pictured left to right: **Velia Yedra-Chruszcz**, Mayor of West Miami; **Patrick Gleason**, SFWMD Governing Board Member; **Commissioner Ariel J. Abelairas**, City of Sweetwater; **Gerardo Fernández**, SFWMD Governing Board Member; **Commissioner José Díaz**, City of Sweetwater; **Commissioner Javier Souto**, Miami-Dade County; **Commissioner José “Pepe” Díaz**, Miami-Dade County (former Mayor of Sweetwater); U.S. Congressman **Lincoln Díaz-Balart**, U. S. House of Representatives; **Commissioner Rebeca Sosa**, Miami-Dade County; State Representative **Carlos Lacasa**, Florida House of Representatives; and **Nicolás Gutiérrez**, SFWMD Governing Board Member.

Officials Break Ground on Miami-Dade Flood Improvement Project

Numerous federal, state, regional, county and local dignitaries gathered in Miami-Dade County on October 4 to celebrate the groundbreaking of a project designed to help provide relief to flood-plagued local communities.

Part of a proactive and collaborative approach to resolving the area's chronic flooding problems, an emergency impoundment basin is being built to temporarily hold diverted flood water when area canal levels rise in response to heavy rains. When canal levels subside, the water will be directed back into the canal network for discharge to the coast.

Other flood-control enhancements under way in Miami-Dade County include the construction of two pumping stations to help lower water levels in advance of forecasted storms, and the removal of any canal constrictions that might hamper water flow during emergency situations.

In addition to those pictured at the left, David Struhs, Secretary of Florida's Department of Environmental Protection, and Henry Dean, SFWMD Executive Director, participated in the groundbreaking event.